

LAS VEGAS SUN

3 JUN 1968

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Inside Washington

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Clues To Assassination

WASHINGTON — The Federal Bureau of Investigation's massive probe of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King is taking a possibly sensational turn.

With James Earl Ray, the suspected assassin, apparently either outside the U. S. or now dead, FBI agents have increased their surveillance of several American Communists known to have been closely associated with King, including one who wrote speeches for him in the past.

This new development was triggered by evidence gathered by the more than 1,000 agents who have worked on the mysterious King shooting and by several "tips" and letters sent to the FBI.

One of the most interesting of these "tips" came from an alert TV viewer and concerns the now famous "Mountain Top" speech King made on April 3, the night before his slaying, showing a premonition of his impending death.

"If the speech was truly made in Memphis on April 3 as reported," the letter pointed out, "then how can one account for King stating his age as 36 (instead of 39) and why does he speak of demonstrating in Alabama twice during the speech?"

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

After checking out the time and location of King's final speech, several of the crack FBI agents assigned to the case decided to begin seeking answers to a number of their own questions, including:

"If King had personally written that speech, why would he make mistakes like those contained in it—especially the one involving his age?"

"If the speech was written by someone other than King, who was the author and when was it written?"

The answers to these questions are considered highly important to the investigation, since, if another person was concerned in the preparation of that speech, the writer might be able to shed new light on it—especially those mistakes.

Also, if King had received help with the speech, the passages dealing with the civil rights leader's premonition of death would probably have been fully discussed. King's request to the Detroit police department for protection when he visited that city a few weeks before his death indicated he feared for his life then.

Information gathered by the FBI on King, prior to his assassination, showed that a secret member of the Communist Party's executive committee was one of King's closest advisers and speech writers.

This ghost writer for King prepared many of his most famous speeches, according to testimony given by FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover during a closed door meeting of a House Appropriations subcommittee.

Since Ray during his trips prior to King's assassination visited the same city in which this ghost writer lives, the FBI is now investigating to determine if the two met covertly.

WIDENING THE INVESTIGATION

Recent evidence gathered by FBI agents in one of the most massive probes in the nation's history has forced serious investigation of these possibilities:

- That somebody close to King or within his own organization tipped off his assassin as to the civil rights leader's routine on the day of his slaying.

- That Ray was hired directly by certain black nationalists who paid him with money made available by foreign sources.

- That an international Communist "assassin squad" was involved in the slaying.

Because of Ray's mysterious trips to Mexico and Canada shortly before the assassination, the entire U. S. intelligence operation, ranging from the Central Intelligence Agency to the Defense Intelligence Agency, has been pressed into the hunt for King's killer.

One CIA report indicates that Ray, who is linked to the murder weapon by fingerprints and ballistic data, may have visited Cuba during his Mexican trip, according to information furnished by a Mexican airline official.

The FBI assumption is that, if there was a conspiracy to kill King, those involved made arrangements to spirit their hired killer out of the U.S. to Cuba via either Mexico or Canada.

THE CHANGING TIMES

Probably the greatest irony of the probe of King's assassination is that FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, one of the civil rights leader's severest critics when he was alive, is doing everything in his power to solve the case.

On the other hand, King's closest aides in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference are showing little or no interest in whether the killer is found.

When ~~Rev. Ralph Abernathy~~, King's successor as president of the SCLC, presented a series of demands to Attorney General Ramsey Clark for the "Poor People's" campaign none of these called for more intensive effort to solve King's assassination.

According to persons who attended the meeting, nothing was said about King's death or the FBI investigation, although a number of the poor in "Resurrection City" had urged Abernathy to press for a more vigorous probe.

Congressional supporters of Hoover say there are a number of compelling reasons for Abernathy's silence. Most important of these is King's instruction to key aides of his Southern Christian Leadership Conference not long before his death that no verbal attacks were to be made against Hoover or the FBI for fear of counter action by the FBI director.

The last time King blasted Hoover and the FBI publicly, these lawmakers pointed out, the FBI director called the Negro leader the "most notorious liar" that he had ever known — a statement Hoover has never retracted.

At the time, the King-Hoover exchange resulted in a White House arranged meeting at which the veteran FBI director did most of the talking.

According to an unpublished account given to House Appropriations subcommittee members, Hoover frankly told King that if King ever repeated his unfounded charges against the FBI, everything he knew about King would be made public.

After that blunt warning, King refrained from ever repeating his attack against either Hoover or the FBI. Rev. Abernathy, who accompanied King to Washington for that meeting with Hoover, adopted the same policy.

* The boxed portion of this article did not appear in the Northern Virginia Sun for 4 June 1968.

LAS VEGAS SUN

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9 July 68
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